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ABSTRACT

Recent research has indicated the principal's significance in effective schools. Despite the principal's crucial role in school success, little valid information exists concerning Kentucky principals and their job perceptions. This paper attempts to provide an authoritative database regarding Kentucky principals. The Kentucky Administrator's Questionnaire (KAQ), based mainly on Claude Frady's research, was first field tested with graduate students at Western Kentucky University and then mailed to all principals (1,715) in the state. Follow-ups to nonrespondents generated a sufficient response rate (51.9 percent) to permit data analysis. The 32-question instrument revealed the following demographic data: age, sex, marital status, race, school size, salary, hours spent on the job, previous memberships, and educational attainment level. Principals also rated current inservice programs and certification standards. Perceptions were also generated regarding principals' different roles and reasons for entering the principalship. Finally, respondents rated the most important traits for principals and reasons for the dropout problem. Data concerning principal turnover were also reported. Results showed the "average" respondent to be white, male, and 46 years old. The majority of respondents had 10 years or less experience as a principal. More than 75 percent were satisfied with their inservice training. Most reported working between 50 and 59 hours per week. Additionally, 61 percent plan to retire within the next 10 years. Most respondents were principals of small schools (600 students). Included are 17 data tables and an appendix containing the KAQ. (MLH)

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THE KENTUCKY PRINCIPAL: A SELF PERCEPTION

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association in Louisville, Kentucky, November 8-11, 1988.

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ABSTRACT

THE KENTUCKY PRINCIPAL: A SELF PERCEPTION

Recent research has indicated the significance of the principal in effective schools. The principal's role is critical to the success of schools, but little valid information is available on current Kentucky principals and their perceptions of the job and its function. Therefore, an authoritative data base was essential regarding principals in the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Administrator's Questionnaire (KAQ) was developed from similar research, particularly Dr. Claude Frady. The questionnaire was field tested with graduate students at Western Kentucky University and mailed to all principals in the state. After follow-ups to non-respondents, a sufficient response, over fifty percent was generated from participants to permit analysis of the data.

The thirty-two question instrument revealed demographic data: age, sex, marital status, race, size of school, salary, hours spend on the job, and educational attainment. Principals also rated current in-service programs and certification standards. Data concerning anticipated principal retirements were also reported.

THE KENTUCKY PRINCIPAL: A SELF PERCEPTION

The decade of the 1980's has produced a growing body of knowledge concerning effective schools and the key role played by principals in such schools. Recent research has pointed out the critical role of the principal in both school effectiveness and school improvement. Research contends that the principal is the most crucial position in the school system. As the principal's responsibility has increased, so has the pressure on school boards and superintendents to make appropriate appointments when principal vacancies occur. Institutions of higher education need more information regarding the demographics of practicing principals as they endeavor to design relevant principal preparation programs, and to meet the demands for future principals.

BACKGROUND

The obsolete perception of the school administrator as a passive, reactive manager has yielded to a more accurate perception of the administrator as a proactive instructional leader. Evidence accumulated from research, coupled with widespread, contemporary concern regarding the quality of American education, has contributed to a renewed interest in

the important role school administrators play in initiating and sustaining school excellence.

INTRODUCTION

Little valid information existed concerning the status of principals in Kentucky. Sparks conducted a study of Kentucky secondary principals in 1955. Frady conducted two follow-up studies of the secondary principals in 1965 and 1975. However, since Frady's last study, a void has existed with regard to the availability of relevant information during the past fifteen years.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The previous research conducted by Sparks and Frady provided sample questions for the current research. In addition, previous research studies conducted with Tennessee and Georgia principals contributed some sample questions. After review of the question sources, the researchers constructed the Kentucky Administrator Questionnaire (KAQ). The KAQ was field tested by two separate administrations with graduate students at Western Kentucky University in the spring of 1988.

Revisions and subsequent modifications culminated in the KAQ (see appendix) which was administered to principals. A total population of 1715 principals was identified from Kentucky State Department of Education records. The KAQ was mailed to the total population with a cover letter explaining

the purpose of the study and the use of the results, together with a postage-paid return envelope.

The first mailing was sent September, 1988 with a follow-up in October 1988. As a consequence of both mailings, 928 responses were received. Eleven envelopes were returned due to school closing. Fifteen respondents were principals of two schools which reduced the usable response to 902. Three were identified as being ill and unable to respond to the survey. Additionally, five principals returned the KAQ but refused to answer the questions, and four respondents provided incomplete and unusable information. Consequently, the total usable response was 890, for a 51.90 percent usable response rate.

FINDINGS

The primary research results reported in this presentation relate to the demographic data collected as a response to administration of the KAQ. One of the major objectives of this study was to determine the status of practicing principals, particularly regarding age and the principals anticipated length of service. Fifty-four point three percent of the respondents were aged forty-five or over. The mean age of the respondents was 45.9 years (see Table I). Elementary principals were represented in larger numbers at both ends of the age spectrum (see Table II). Two point three percent of all respondents were elementary principals aged thirty or younger. In comparison, only point

three percent of the respondents were high school principals aged thirty or younger, and no middle school principal respondents fit the category. At the upper end of the scale, 3.7 percent of the responding elementary principals were aged sixty or over, while 0.3 of the high school principals and 0.1 percent of the middle school respondents were sixty or over.

The trend, over the past few decades, has been a reduction in the number of female principals. The respondents reported that 27.9 percent were female and 72.1 percent were male (see Table III). Crosstabulation with the type of school variable yielded a ratiocination of gender in each school level (see Table IV). Forty-one point five percent of the male respondents were elementary principals as were 23.4 percent of the female respondents. By comparison, 15.8 percent of the male respondents were high school principals, while 2.5 percent of the female respondents were employed at the secondary level. In total, 64.9 percent of the respondents were elementary principals, 11.3 percent were middle school principals, 18.3 percent were high school principals and 5.5 percent were employed in some other combination of grades or responsibility.

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents were white, 1.88 percent were Black, and 0.12 percent were Hispanic (see Table V). Similarly, 97.7 percent were married, 2.2 percent were single and 0.1 percent were widowed (see Table VI).

Respondents reported that 51.7 percent had been a

principal at their current school for five years or less (see Table VII). Over seventy-five percent of the respondents had been a principal at their current school for ten years or less. The mean years at the current school was 7.32.

The salary reported by respondents indicated an upward movement since the last study (see Table VIII). For example, 26.7 percent recounted a salary in excess of $43,000.00; however, 22.4 percent indicated a salary less than $34,000.00. Over fifty percent of the respondents reported a salary between $34,000.00 and $43,000.00 with a mean of $38,546.02. The largest percentage (49.7) of respondents also indicated that their salary was based upon employment for twelve months (see Table IX).

The respondents reported that the majority, 54.2 percent, had ten or less years of total experience as a principal (see Table X). The mean number of years of total experience as a principal was 8.13 which compares with 7.32 number of years experience in their current school (see Table VII).

More than half, 57.3 percent, of the respondents received their first degree from a public institution of higher education in Kentucky (see Table XI). Western Kentucky University (16.7 percent) and Eastern Kentucky University (11.4 percent) graduated the largest number. A majority of respondents, 83.5 percent, graduated from a college or university in Kentucky (see Table XII).

The majority of respondents were satisfied with

inservice training in Kentucky (see Table XIII). More than seventy-five percent were mostly or entirely satisfied with their inservice training. Similarly, 72.8 percent of the respondents were mostly or entirely satisfied with administrative certification in Kentucky (see Table XIV). Only 14.5 percent were mostly or entirely unsatisfied with certification requirements.

The majority of respondents (51.4 percent) reported working between fifty and fifty nine hours per week with at mean of 52.64 (see Table XV). In addition, 60.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they plan to retire in the next ten years (see Table XVI).

Most of the respondents, over seventy percent, were principals of small (less than 600 students) schools. Only one respondent was principal of a school of more than 2,000 students.

TABLES

TABLE I

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGES	N	%
Under 25	1	.1%
25 - 29	5	.6%
30 - 34	24	2.7%
35 - 39	114	13.0%
40 - 44	256	29.2%
45 - 49	233	26.6%
50 - 54	114	13.0%
55 - 59	91	10.4%
60 - 64	28	3.2%
65 - 69	9	1.0%
70 +	1	.1%
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 45.90	876	100.0%

TABLE II

CROSS TABULATION
AGE BY SCHOOL

AGE	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	ELEMENTARY
25 - 29			.6
30 - 34	.3		2.2
35 - 39	1.6	1.4	9.0
40 - 44	6.1	3.1	18.6
45 - 49	4.9	4.3	16.6
50 - 54	2.5	1.8	7.6
55 - 59	2.2	.5	6.8
60 - 64	.3	.1	2.7
65 - 69			.9
70 +			.1
TOTALS	18.0	11.3	65.2

TABLE III

SEX OF RESPONDENTS

SEX	N	%
Male	637	72.1%
Female	246	27.9%
TOTALS	883	100.0%

TABLE IV

CROSS TABULATION
SEX BY SCHOOL

SEX	%	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	ELEMENTARY	OTHER
Male	72.1%	15.8%	9.9%	41.5%	4.9%
Female	27.9%	2.5%	1.4%	23.4%	.6%
TOTALS	100.0%	18.3%	11.3%	64.9%	5.5%

TABLE V

RACE OF RESPONDENT

RACE	N	%
White	786	98.00%
Black	15	1.88%
Hispanic	1	.12%
TOTALS	802	100.00%

TABLE VI

MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

STATUS	N	%
Married	801	97.7%
Single	18	2.2%
Widowed	1	.1%
TOTALS	820	100.0%

TABLE VII

RESPONDENTS YEARS AS PRINCIPAL AT CURRENT SCHOOL

YEARS	N	%
1 - 5	459	51.7%
6 - 10	209	23.6%
11 - 15	113	12.7%
16 - 20	82	9.2%
21 - 25	16	1.8%
26 - 30	7	.8%
31 - 35	1	.1%
TOTALS $\bar{X} = 7.32$	887	100.0%

TABLE VIII

SALARY OF RESPONDENTS

SALARY	N	%
Less than $10,000	6	.7%
$10,000 - $12,999	11	1.3%
$13,000 - $15,999	4	.5%
$16,000 - $18,999	9	1.1%
$19,000 - $21,999	6	.7%
$22,000 - $24,999	17	2.0%
$25,000 - $27,999	25	3.0%
$28,000 - $30,999	40	4.7%
$31,000 - $33,999	71	8.4%
$34,000 - $36,999	115	13.6%
$37,000 - $39,999	162	19.1%
$40,000 - $42,999	154	18.2%
$43,000 - $45,999	83	9.8%
$46,000 - $48,999	58	6.9%
$49,000 - $51,999	37	4.4%
$52,000 - $54,999	15	1.8%
$55,000 - $57,999	8	.9%
$58,000 - $60,999	15	1.8%
$61,000 - $63,999	7	.8%
$64,000 +	3	.4%
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = $38,546.02	846	100.0%

TABLE IX

MONTHS USED TO DETERMINE RESPONDENT'S SALARY

MONTHS	N	%
Less than 9	3	.3%
9	13	1.5%
10	145	16.7%
11	276	31.8%
12	429	49.7%
TOTALS	866	100.0%

TABLE X

RESPONDENTS TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

YEARS	N	%
1 - 5	266	30.1%
6 - 10	213	24.1%
11 - 15	168	19.0%
16 - 20	156	17.6%
21 - 25	52	5.9%
26 - 30	23	2.6%
31 - 35	6	.7%
35+	1	.1%
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 8.13	885	100.0%

TABLE XI

INSTITUTION GRANTING FIRST DEGREE TO RESPONDENT

SCHOOL	N	%
U of K	69	7.8%
U of L	31	3.5%
WKU	148	16.7%
EKU	101	11.4%
Murray	75	8.5%
KSU	2	.2%
Northern	4	.5%
Morehead	77	8.7%
Other	378	42.7%
TOTALS	885	100.0%

TABLE XII

STATE OF RESPONDENT'S FIRST DEGREE

STATE	N	%
Kentucky	737	83.5%
Ohio	26	2.9%
Missouri	2	.2%
Indiana	16	1.8%
Tennessee	38	4.3%
Illinois	7	.8%
West Virginia	6	.7%
Virginia	2	.2%
Other	49	5.5%
TOTALS	883	100.0%

TABLE XIII

RESPONDENTS RATING OF INSERVICE TRAINING

RATING	N	%
Entirely Satisfactory	80	9.3%
Mostly Satisfactory	574	66.4%
Equally Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory	99	11.5%
Mostly Unsatisfactory	90	10.4%
Entirely Unsatisfactory	21	2.4%
TOTALS	864	100.0%

TABLE XIV

RESPONDENTS LEVEL OF SATISFACTION REGARDING CERTIFICATION

RATING	N	%
Entirely Satisfactory	85	9.8%
Mostly Satisfactory	548	63.0%
Equally Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory	111	12.8%
Mostly Unsatisfactory	105	12.1%
Entirely Unsatisfactory	21	2.4%
TOTALS	870	100.0%

TABLE XV

HOURS WORKED PER WEEK BY RESPONDENTS

HOURS	N	%
Less than 40	56	6.5%
40 - 49	139	16.1%
50 - 59	388	51.4%
60 - 69	213	24.6%
70 +	68	7.9%
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 52.64	864	100.0%

TABLE XVI

PROJECTED RETIREMENT OF RESPONDENTS

RETIREMENT	N	%
Within 10 years	516	60.7%
More than 10 years	334	39.3%
TOTALS	850	100.0%

TABLE XVII

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF RESPONDENTS

ENROLLMENT	N	%
Less than 100	44	5.0%
100 - 199	79	9.0%
200 - 299	114	13.0%
300 - 399	133	15.2%
400 - 499	138	15.8%
500 - 599	106	12.1%
600 - 699	82	9.4%
700 - 799	59	6.8%
800 - 899	28	3.2%
900 - 999	25	2.9%
1000 - 1099	18	2.1%
1100 - 1199	12	1.4%
1200 - 1299	7	.8%
1300 - 1399	10	1.1%
1400 - 1499	5	.6%
1500 - 1599	1	.1%
1600 - 1699	5	.6%
1700 - 1799	1	.1%
1800 - 1899	3	.3%
1900 - 1999	3	.3%
2000 - 2299	1	.1%
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 496.76	874	100.0%

APPENDIX

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Educational Leadership

We realize how busy you are at the beginning of the school year. However, we need your assistance with this project. We are attempting to update a study of Kentucky school principals that was first completed in 1955 and later in 1965 and 1975 by Dr. Claude Frady.

It will take less than five minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and place it in the return envelope. Please take a few minutes and help contribute to the information on practicing principals.

All the questionnaires have been coded to allow follow up. No names will be revealed and the data will be compiled and reported in group form.

We trust you will complete the questionnaire and return it at your earliest convenience, but not later than September 30, 1988.

In advance, thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Claude Frady

Claude Frady, Ed.D.
Professor - Retired

M. D. Richardson

M. D. Richardson, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor

Dwight Cline

H. D. Cline, Ed.D.
Professor

Jack Flanigan

Jack Flanigan, Ed.D.
Associate Professor

CF:ptr

enclosures

KENTUCKY ADMINISTRATOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Date of birth: ____ /____ /____
2. Sex: ____ Male ____ Female
3. Marital status: ____ Single 4. Your race: ____ White

   ____ Married ____ Black

   ____ Divorced ____ Hispanic

   ____ Widowed ____ Other
5. Including this year, how many years have you been principal of your present school?

   _____ years
6. What is your present regular annual salary? $_____/yr.
7. How many working months are used to determine this salary?

   _____ months
8. Including the principalship at your present school, how many years have you been a principal?

   _____ years
9. Please indicate all academic degrees beyond high school that you have earned and identify the college/university, the state, the academic majors, and the years in which the degrees were received.

DEGREES	COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY	STATE	MAJORS	YEAR RECEIVED

10. How would you rate the in-service training program available to you in the commonwealth? (Please check most appropriate response.)

    ____ Entirely satisfactory ____ Mostly unsatisfactory

    ____ Mostly satisfactory ____ Entirely unsatisfactory

    ____ Equally satisfactory/unsatisfactory
11. Please indicate your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding the present certification standards for school administrators in Kentucky:

    ____ Entirely satisfactory ____ Mostly unsatisfactory

    ____ Mostly satisfactory ____ Entirely unsatisfactory

    ____ Equally satisfactory/unsatisfactory

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12. Do you favor some form of merit pay for administrators in Kentucky?

____ Yes ____ No

13. What are the major constraints you face as principal of your school?

_____

_____

14. What professional publications do you read? _____

_____

_____

15. What position did you hold immediately before your current principalship?

____ Classroom teacher ____ Assistant principalship

____ Athletic coach ____ Another principalship

____ Other _____

16. What type of school are you a principal of:

____ Public ____ Private

17. Please rank in order <u>three</u> of the following items in terms of the role you currently have as a principal and the role you would ideally like to have: (1 = Most important role, 2 = Next in importance, 3 = Third in importance)

ROLE	CURRENT RANKING	IDEAL RANKING
Instructional Leader (curriculum planning, etc.)		
School Manager (budget, correspondence, etc.)		
Community Leader (PTA, advisory groups, etc.)		
Personnel Leader (staff advising, etc.)		
Disciplinarian (monitoring behavior, etc.)		
Professional Developer (conferences, etc.)		
Planner (long range policy, etc.)		
Coordinator of extra-curricular activities		

18. Have you ever been a coach?

____ Yes

____ No

19. In which state did you complete high school?

_____

20. If there was very little difference in the salary, would you prefer classroom teaching to being a principal?

____ Yes ____ No

21. How long does it take to become a good principal?

_____ years

22. Memberships: (Check if you are a member.)

____ KAESP ____ KEA

____ NAESP ____ KASA

____ NASSP ____ ASCD

____ KASSP ____ KASCD

____ NEA ____ Other _____

23. Please rank in order three of the following items in terms of your reasons for becoming a principal. (1 = Primary reason, 2 = Secondary reason, 3 = Tertiary reason)

REASON	RANKING
Improved income over previous position	
More prestige than previous position	
Interest in improving students' academic performance	
Desire to make educational improvements for teachers	
Springboard for superintendentency	
Desire to be in a leadership position	
Encouragement of others	
Please specify others: _____	

24. Do you consider realistic the present state requirement that the principal spend 50% of his/her time in supervision of instruction? What is the ideal relationship?

____ Yes _____% instructional leadership

____ No _____% administrative management

25. Did you attend a State or National Professional meeting in the previous year?

____ Yes ____ No If YES, which: _____

26. Do you plan to retire within the next 10 years?

____ Yes ____ No

27. What traits should a principal possess? (Rate in order of importance; with 1 being most important and 18 being least important.)

____ Breadth of Interest	____ Honesty
____ Consideration	____ Industry
____ Cooperativeness	____ Open-minded
____ Dependability	____ Promptness
____ Fluency	____ Refinement
____ Forcefulness	____ Scholarship
____ Good Appearance	____ Self Control
____ Good Health	____ Sense of Honor
____ Good Judgement	____ Tactfulness

28. Do you believe there is any relationship between the number of units required for graduation and the dropout problem?

____ Yes ____ No

29. Do you believe the state superintendent should be an appointed official?

____ Yes ____ No

30. In what area do you believe the greatest need for improvement exists in Kentucky schools (i.e., English, math, science, finance, governance, etc.)? _____

_____

31. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend at school and school related functions?

_____ hours

32. How many students are enrolled in your current school?

_____ students